

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Assistant Senate Majority Leader Dick Durbin (D-IL) and House Democratic Caucus Chairman John Larson (D-CT) introduced the *Fair Elections Now Act*

today, a bill that will dramatically change the way we finance Congressional elections. Under the new law, qualified, legitimate candidates will receive grants, matching funds, and television vouchers to run competitive campaigns based on small dollar donors, not special interest money from lobbyists and corporations.

“Americans would be shocked if they knew how much time Members of Congress and candidates seeking office must spend dialing for dollars and attending fundraisers. Without a fundamental reform of the way we finance campaigns, we cannot bring real reform to Capitol Hill,” Durbin said. “Our bill will give candidates the opportunity to focus on dealing with our nation’s problems, not on chasing after campaign cash.”

“Members go to Washington with all the integrity in the world and with the intention to serve their constituents and this great country, but the system of dialing for dollars has become corrosive,” added Larson. “The Fair Elections Now Act would put the Congress back in the hands of ordinary Americans by replacing big donor, special interest funded elections with Fair Elections so that lawmakers can focus on their constituents instead of lobbyists; and the issues instead of fundraising.”

The *Fair Elections Now Act* would create a voluntary system that gives congressional candidates the option to stop raising huge sums of money, giving them more time to work on the people’s business. Candidates who participate in the Fair Elections process would agree to limit their campaign fundraising to the amounts raised from small dollar donors plus matching contributions from the Fair Elections Fund.

The bill is cosponsored by Senators Boxer (D-CA), Franken (D-MN); Harkin (D-IA); Kerry (D-MA); Klobuchar (D-MN); Leahy (D-VT); Merkley (D-OR); Mikulski (D-MD); Sanders (I-VT) and Shaheen (D-NH). The House bill is lead by the bi-partisan efforts of Representatives Walter Jones (R-NC) and Chellie Pingree (D-ME) and enjoys the support of 46 co-sponsors.

How the Fair Elections Bill Works:

- It's voluntary – no candidate for Congress is compelled to use this system.
- Candidates must raise a minimum level of small individual contributions from people in their state, in order to demonstrate viability and qualify for the program.
- Once they qualify, candidates will abide by various restrictions and disclosure requirements.
- Qualified candidates will receive an up-front grant for their primary campaigns, and if nominated, another grant for their general election campaign.
- Candidates will also receive a 5:1 match for contributions of \$100 or less from an individual; no individual may give more than \$100 per election; that match will stop after a certain level is reached, but candidates may continue to raise donations of up to \$100 per individual without a match.
- A new commission will administer the program, including the disbursement of funds and collection of reports.
- There is no overall spending limit. Candidates may continue to raise funds after they have reached the cap on their match.
- Participating candidates could take only individual contributions of \$100 or less for their leadership PACs.
- No contributions, fundraising, or bundling will be allowed from PACs.
- There will be special provisions for candidates in uncontested races (at significantly lower funding levels).

The following groups support the *Fair Elections Now Act*: Public Citizen; American for Campaign Reform; Common Cause; Brennan Center; Center for Responsive Politics; Center for Responsibility Ethics in Washington; Democracy Matters; Demos; NAACP; American Sustainable Business Council; Rock the Vote; MoveOn.org Political Action; US Action;

U.S. Public Interest Research Group; Alliance for Justice; Campaign for Community Change; CREW; Democracy for America; Fix Congress First; League of Conservation Voters; Main Street Alliance; People of the American Way; Progress Now; Progressive Change Campaign Committee; Public Campaign; and the Sierra Club.

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